

DEATH OF GEORGIAN PRIME MINISTER

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I take a moment to share with the Senate the very sad news from Georgia this morning that Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania has died in what Georgian officials are calling an accident.

According to government statements, he apparently suffocated during a meeting with his friend and Georgian deputy governor, Zurab Usupov, from a gas leak in a space heater. Mr. Usupov also died.

We send our condolences to his wife, three children and the people of Georgia. Prime Minister Zhvania led a crusade for freedom and democracy in Georgia that brought about the Rose Revolution.

As Prime Minister, he led the fight to root out corruption and set Georgia on a new path where democratic institutions could flourish. At the time of his death, he was advocating a peaceful resolution to the problems in South Ossetia.

We mourn his death. People throughout the world, who believe in freedom, democracy, human rights, and the viability of peaceful political opposition in a political struggle, mourn him as well. He will be missed.

TRIBUTE TO VERNON COOPER, JR.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to a world traveler who always comes home to his beloved Hazard, KY, Vernon Cooper, Jr.

Mr. Cooper has fought in Asia in World War II, skinned seals with Eskimos in the Arctic, and climbed mountains in the Andes. But after all those vast experiences, his Perry County home in eastern Kentucky holds a prime place in his heart, and he expresses this through great generosity.

Mr. Cooper, 81 and the former president of Hazard's People's Bank and Trust Co., is happy to give back to his community. A year ago, he learned that the sheriff of Perry County planned to lay off all of his deputies at Christmastime because of a strained budget. Mr. Cooper donated \$20,000 to the county to keep the deputies in uniform over the holidays.

A 1941 graduate of Hazard High School, Mr. Cooper donated \$120,000 to install lights on the school's baseball fields. Parents are thrilled they can now watch their children's night games. And if they ever want to thank their patron, they don't have far to look—Mr. Cooper still attends games, wearing his Hazard High School jersey with the name "Bruiser"—his World War II nickname across the back.

Mr. Cooper has also filled in as a guest host at WLJC, a Beattyville, KY, Christian radio station. When he learned of their hopes to reach a larger audience, he donated \$50,000 for a new transmitter. Now three times as many homes as before receive WLJC's signal.

Perhaps Mr. Cooper's largest gift of all was the gift of life. He donated over \$200,000 to the Appalachian Regional Healthcare Regional Medical Center in Hazard to build an open-heart surgery unit.

Before Mr. Cooper's gift, Hazard-area residents had to travel over 60 miles for an open-heart procedure. The new unit admitted its first patient this month, and its director hopes to perform around 100 open-heart surgeries this year.

Kentucky's greatest resource has always been its compassionate, friendly people. To any who doubt this, I direct them to look at Vernon Cooper, Jr., as a model for all of us to follow. I ask the Senate to join me in recognizing a man who generously wants to give as much back to Kentucky as it has given to him.

Mr. President, recently the Courier-Journal published a story about Mr. Cooper, "Hazard Man, 81, shares his millions with others." I ask unanimous consent that the full article be included in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Courier-Journal, Jan. 22, 2005]

HAZARD MAN, 81, SHARES HIS MILLIONS WITH OTHERS; DEPUTIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITAL GET GIFTS

(By Alan Maimon)

HAZARD, KY—When Vernon Cooper Jr. takes interest in a cause, he lets his checkbook do the talking.

Because of Cooper's largess, eight Perry County sheriff's deputies kept their jobs during Christmas 2003, a Beattyville television station tripled its potential viewership, and school baseball and softball teams in Hazard now play under the lights.

His latest gift—of more than \$200,000—helped build an open-heart surgery unit at a Hazard hospital.

Cooper, who is 81 and former president of People's Bank and Trust Co. in Hazard, said he is a multimillionaire who has made a hobby out of giving back to his community.

"I've been around the world, but this is the most special place in the world to me," Cooper said at his mountaintop home.

"Hazard is my home, and where's there a need I like to help."

Just over a year ago, Perry County Sheriff Pat Wooton was facing a blue Christmas as he prepared to lay off all his deputies because of a tight budget.

Cooper heard about the situation and pledged \$20,000 to Perry Fiscal Court to keep the officers on the job until officials could allocate more money to the department.

"He's a very civic-minded individual and has been for a long time," Wooton said. "He has made significant contributions to so many areas in Perry County."

Cooper said he has given hundreds of such gifts over the years.

BRUISER'S GIFT

A deep-rooted sense of school spirit led him to make the largest contribution in the 92-year history of the Hazard Independent School District.

Cooper, a 1941 graduate of Hazard High School and a former school board member, wrote a \$120,000 check in 2003 for the installa-

tion of lights at the high school's baseball and softball fields.

District Superintendent James Francis said the lights have helped Hazard attract regional tournaments and allowed working parents to see more of their children's games.

"No one has been more instrumental in the progress the school district has made," Francis said.

Cooper still prowls the sidelines of Hazard football games wearing a jersey with "Bruiser"—his World War II nickname—across the back.

UK DONATION

In 1999, Cooper's generosity had unintended consequences when he mailed a \$500 check to the University of Kentucky to help pay for a summer football camp.

An internal investigation of the football program showed the check was endorsed by former UK football recruiting coordinator Claude Bassett and sent to a high school football coach in Memphis, Tenn.

University officials said any gifts to UK should pass through its Office of Development and be deposited in university accounts. Cooper was not accused of any wrongdoing.

Bassett was fired, but Cooper did not let the incident dampen his generous spirit.

"I learned a lesson that not everybody can be trusted, but most people can," he said.

The incident also reaffirmed for Cooper the importance of getting receipts for his donations.

"That's all I ask for in return," he said. "I need a receipt, so I won't have problems with the government."

Cooper, a 1949 UK graduate, said he now opts to build strong relationships with organizations before parting with his money.

Cooper recently gave \$50,000 to WLJC, a television and radio station in Beattyville whose call letters stand for Wonderful Lord Jesus Christ.

Jonathan Drake, manager of WLJC, said the money helped buy a transmitter that nearly tripled the number of homes the station reaches.

"He is a man with a very large heart," Drake said. "He got to know us, was a guest host for us and then really helped out."

HOSPITAL GIFT

One of Cooper's largest gifts to date arrived in several installments to the Appalachian Regional Healthcare Regional Medical Center in Hazard.

Charles Housley, the hospital chain's executive director of development, said the gift went toward building an open-heart surgery unit in an area that has lacked such a facility. Cooper said the amount was \$200,000, but Housley said it was more, declining to be specific.

Ashland, Pikeville, and London—each more than 60 miles from Hazard—had been the only Eastern Kentucky towns to offer the open-heart procedure.

"We hope to give him some recognition for that," Housley said.

The Hazard hospital admitted its first open-heart patient earlier this month and expects to perform around 100 surgeries this year, Housley said.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Cooper said his fondness for philanthropy stems from a love of the mountains of Eastern Kentucky, something he first recognized during a four-day train trip to a California naval base in 1943.

When the then 22-year-old sailor returned from World War II service in Asia, he

dreamed of seeing the world but vowed always to return to the Appalachian communities he held dear.

A blind date in 1945 led to marriage. Cooper said he and his wife separated about 25 years ago but remain married. His wife could not be reached for comment.

In his home, Cooper has pictures of himself climbing some of the world's largest mountains. He said he has skinned seals with Eskimos, and he has a jacket identifying him as an honorary colonel in the Argentine army.

But during his travels from the Arctic to the Andes and the Alps, he said he has always had Kentucky on his mind.

Standing beneath the observatory above his home on a recent afternoon, Cooper contemplated his next act of good will.

"I have some things in mind," he said. "There are a lot of worthwhile places out there."

WORDS OF WISDOM

Mr. REID. Our friend and colleague, Senator Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, left us last year to enjoy a well-earned retirement. However, he still has a few words of wisdom, and just a little vitriol, that he would like to share.

Senator Hollings was one of the most fascinating speakers ever to take the Senate floor. His comments were sometimes controversial, but always thought-provoking and delivered in a way only Fritz Hollings could orate. We miss him.

I ask unanimous consent that the statement of Senator Hollings be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. I may not agree with all his statements, but as usual I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. I hope all Americans will enjoy it as well.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

STATE OF THE UNION

On leaving the Senate after 38 years, I am constantly asked "what is your legacy?" Answer—a mess! While the country is going broke and jobs are hemorrhaging, G.I.s are getting killed in an unwinnable war, and nobody cares. At least there is no sacrifice. In Washington Republicans and Democrats are in a Mexican standoff. Amid shouts that Social Security is "flat broke", the nation's security is being undermined.

Our security rests as on a three legged stool. The first leg—values—has always been the strongest. The United States has always been admired for its sacrifice for human rights and freedom. But our invasion of Iraq has created a training ground for terrorists and given Islamic television Al Jazeera a daily drumbeat of U.S. "atrocities." The second leg—economic—enjoyed its strongest era in the 1990's with low inflation, record growth and a strong dollar. The budget was balanced in 2001 with the recession lasting less than 9 months. But the tax cuts of the last four years caused deficits of \$141.1 billion, \$428.5 billion, \$562 billion, and \$593 billion. These fiscal deficits together with a trade deficit of \$600 billion have the dollar in a dive. With our outsourcing of jobs policy the United States is fast losing its productive capacity. Finally, the third leg—mili-

tary—has us again, as in Vietnam, losing. For the first time regulars in the Army are suing against extended duty and Americans are refusing to join the Guard and Reserves.

The need is to rebuild America. To get Congress to lead the rebuilding we must excise the cancer of money on the body politic and adopt a constitutional amendment: "The Congress of the United States is hereby empowered to regulate and control spending in federal elections." This will immediately limit campaigns, and cut the time raising money. Next, limit each senator to two committees—no exceptions. Then cut the staffs. Now the Senators will have time to work on the people's business rather than the campaign.

The first order of business is to get on top of health costs and provide healthcare for all of America. Next, instead of tax cuts enact a 2 percent VAT tax to pay for Iraq, Afghanistan and to eliminate the deficit. This will limit our disadvantage with global trade and strengthen the economy. Then resume Cordell Hull's reciprocal free trade policy by: Instituting a Department of Trade and Commerce bringing the Special Trade Representative and other trade entities under one roof; abolishing the International Trade Commission transferring its duties to the International Trade Administration; eliminating the tax benefit for jobs going offshore and giving the break to businesses producing onshore; appointing an Assistant U.S. Attorney General to enforce trade laws; employing the necessary customs agents to stop transshipments; enlarging rather than eliminating the Advanced Technology Program; and reviewing our membership in the World Trade Organization.

Then provide the needs of air, rail and port security. Adopt an energy bill, a highway bill and begin to control the immigration and drug problem by adopting a Marshall plan for Mexico.

Finally confront the terror that confronts us. It's not the terror of Northern Ireland or Spain. It's not because of who we are or our values. It's because of our Israel-Palestine policy that appears one-sided. We confirmed this appearance with our invasion of Iraq. Terrorism got organized and spread. Now our problem is we are neither in nor out. It's too late to get in with the necessary troops so the best way to support the Iraq election is to remove ourselves as "occupiers." As former Senator George Aiken of Vermont said "declare victory and withdraw." Then have the Commander in Chief go to the front line of terrorism and instead of proclaiming "road maps" on high, have him get down in the traffic for peace.

None of this will happen unless the media gets out of politics. Of course they make more money taking polls and exciting controversy. But now the free press has abandoned its important role of maintaining a strong democracy. Thomas Jefferson signaled this responsibility when he observed; "between a government without newspapers or newspapers with out a government" he would chose the latter. The press used to report the truth to the American people and keep the Congress honest. Instead the press is downfield starting the fight instead of reporting the facts. The fact is that Social Security has a surplus of \$1.7 trillion and is in good shape until 2042. The fact is that the states readily regulate tort reform. The fact is that while the IRS can always stand some reform we can't afford a tax cut at this time. Rather than playing politics with these issues the press should be reporting the State of the Union.

IN MEMORY OF TONY ARMSTRONG

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I rise today, to honor the memory of a great Nevadan, Tony Armstrong, who passed away last Saturday morning.

Tony was the mayor of the town of Sparks, NV, and I had the privilege of working with him in that capacity.

But I rise today not to praise Tony Armstrong the mayor, even though he was a great mayor.

I want to praise Tony Armstrong the husband, the father, the friend, the neighbor.

I rise to praise Tony Armstrong the man who made a positive impression on everyone he met, through the force of an engaging personality that reflected his basic love of people.

Tony spent most of his life in Sparks. He was born in Philadelphia, but his family moved to northern California when he was a toddler, and settled in Sparks when Tony was 4 years old.

Tony attended school in Sparks, and when he graduated high school he joined the Nevada Air National Guard. After serving on active duty for several years, he returned to Washoe County in 1973 and got a job as a building inspector.

In 1983 he married Debbie Rimby, and a couple of years later he started his own contracting company, which later became a private inspection firm.

He first ran for public office in 1987, when he failed to win election to the Sparks City Council. But like many of us who have lost elections, he learned from that experience and it strengthened his determination. He came back 2 years later and won a seat on the city council. Ten years after that, in 1999, the people of Sparks elected him as their mayor.

He was a popular mayor, guided always by his love of Sparks, his appreciation of the city's history, and his vision for the future.

Tony worked to preserve the best aspects of Sparks, the friendly atmosphere that make it such a wonderful place to raise a family, and at the same time, improve the services and amenities.

He realized that the great quality of life in northern Nevada meant that Sparks would continue to grow, and he worked to manage that growth so it would benefit the citizens of the city.

During the 14 years that he served as a city councilman and mayor, Sparks grew from a sleepy little railroad town to a city that is home to about 80,000 people.

He oversaw the development of a project called Victorian Square, which preserves and revitalizes a historic area, and the Sparks Marina. I had the privilege of working with him on that marina project.

He was a tireless champion for his city. Sparks and Reno share a convention center and airport, and Tony Armstrong was constantly working to